



Enhancing Human Development Through Realignment of Communication Tripod: Proxemics, Kinetics and Cybernetics

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ABSTRACT

The paper is founded on the truism that man cannot not communicate, and that communication is universally processual. Thus the communication indices, discoursed, are the tripodal elements of communication namely, the very strategic proxemics, kinetics and cybernetics, each briefly defined in terms of their communicative potentials among the homo-sapiens; especially as synergy for optimizing human life and productivity. It periscopes the concepts of human development, tripodally, through the instrumentality of media or communication infrastructure: electronic, celluloid, stage and related aspects, affirming or redefining some authoritative views, all within the ambits of developmental imperatives. It concludes roundly that the tripods have established themselves singularly and synergistically in the encode-decode communication formula, powered by research and other experiential practitioners. The need to update the concepts cannot be overstressed, especially in their imperative demands to cope with other elements of globalization, which they must highlight and give direction to, in their agender-setting roles in an increasing digitization and electronic revolution, and information technology platforms.

Keywords: Proxemics, kinetics, cybernetics; effective communication indices.

THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN COMMUNICATION: AN INTRODUCTION

Generally speaking, human communication has developed, evolutionized and revolutionized tremendously, following the rapid trend in developmental activities in the world. Modern Homo-Sapiens putatively spend about 75% of their time, each day, in communication, Tubbs and Moss (1991:4), be it verbal or non-verbal. What is more, man communicates variously, even in sleep through the subconscious state. Communication is supposedly a potent

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ingredient of man's dynamic susceptibility for globalization, multiculturalism and liberalization without which there shall be significant stifling of world affairs. This very important societal human imperatives which take place throughout human existence can never be over emphasized. One may ask why so much attention is given to these irreducible concepts of communication. Human communication has been given different meanings, but the one we will hold unto now is the 'sharing of experience'. All Homo Sapiens share varied experiences. What makes human communication unique is the superior ability to create and use symbols according to Tubbs and Moss (1991:5). It is actually this ability that makes humans effectively share experiences directly or indirectly. Through all these, one discovers that, to be able to survive cooperation and/or dissent, commonness with oneself or with others, consciousness elements of integration or disparateness must be developed. This can unfold not only consciously, but also unconsciously, paradoxically, explicitly or implicitly.

Communication in humans can be traced from when a baby is growing in the womb till birth, landmarked by the very first cry to indicate life, to embrace varied backgrounds of the families through which he/she progresses further towards education at various levels, orientation and reorientations and even disorientation and misorientation, after which a satisfying job can be procured or otherwise. In all these, and in even more aspects, challenges are overcome by effective and affective changes in orientations and reorientations of behaviour due, perhaps, to effective communication which, in turn, influences people and their behaviours towards their appropriate adjustments and ideal well-beings. Communication is not limited to humans, but applicable also, to non-humans at varying modes of operation, sharable or non-sharable by humans. Humans are not, reiteratingly, the only creatures that communicate; many other animals exchange signs and signals that help them cope with, and in their environments. Through relevant researches and findings, it can be confirmed that the ability to exchange appropriate information or signals in an environment is very significant for survival. Communication between two or more people is an out growth of methods developed and systematized over decades of formulation, formalization and expressions. Gestures along the development of verbal languages, and the need to engage in joint actions have all played very significant parts, especially in the process of evolution, when such formulation and formalization were codified. Humans, as compared to other animals, have developed complex systems of language that are defensively and offensively used to ensure survival, to express ideas, experiences and emotions; to tell stories and remember the past, projecting towards the future, and to help to confer with one another. To man's understanding, animals use a limited range of sounds or signals to communicate with their varying instincts as avenues for effective communication, affects and effects; sometimes, perhaps, more developed and more reliable than even communication among human. Human communication can be manipulated for various directions; disinformation, misinformation or malformation etc.

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Like in its non-human aspects, human communication is multifarious, and is manifest in every aspect of human existence in eating, dressing, talking, signs, gestures. John Fiske (1982: 1-2) describes it thus:

Communication is one of those human activities that everyone recognizes but few can define satisfactorily. Communication is talking to one another. It is television, it is spreading information, it is our hair style, it is literary criticism: the list is endless.

The essence of communication cannot be over emphasized. Iji (2002: 18) writes on the importance thus:

The imperativeness of communication among varied classes of animals for their respective survival strategies, as well as for varied coexistential imperatives, I believe, is well known and appreciated. Communication scholars have roundly summarised the unavailability or imperativeness of communication among humans by asserting that man cannot not communicate.

Some of the benefits of communication have been looked at, to enable readers and scholars, even stakeholders, to stress something about the versatility and effectiveness of communication system. Modes and media of communication are varied; this includes **proxemics**, **kinetics** and **cybernetics**. These make up what is referred to here as the tripodal concepts, and form the core of this discourse.

THE TRIPODAL CONCEPTS

The theatre artist is fundamentally a social performer or actor involved in the critical exploration of the unpredictable human condition in a dynamic society according to Umukoro (2001:2). The media performer in varied assessments, falls into this category. Theatrical experience is, the combination of creative collaboration between art and science. Umukoro backs up the above statement thus: 'while art liberates the dramatic inspiration, science furnishes the technical framework for the practical realisation of the creative vision.' Nevertheless, there may be still those who will misunderstand the concept of our discourse due to peripheral knowledge of the performing arts, with their inclusive and extended dimensions. Cybernetics which is an interdisciplinary science deals with communication and control systems in living organisms, machines and organizations. It develops as the investigation of the techniques by which information can be transformed into desired and desirable performance. Systems of communication and control in living organisms, and those in machines are considered analogous in cybernetics. To achieve a desired performance initiative from human organisations or from mechanical devices, information concerning the actual results of intended action must be made available as

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software on a guide for future action. In the human body, the brain and the nervous system function to coordinate and interpret the information, which is then used to arrive at a future or putative course of action. The principle is known as a feedback mechanism, whereas communication encoded and decoded by movements of the body can be referred to as Kinetics. In kinetics, artists or actors or media performers are involved in changes effected and produced by motions, implicating or even interrogating one another. In the process, there is a cyclic vertical and/or horizontal movements. Usually, this trend is characterized by inevitable movement of bodies which invariably influence one another engendering various levels of meaningful behavior-interventional interactions. This connotes dynamic movements in terms of origination vis-a-vis all the elements of feedback; these are all the implications of this effect of cyclic motion, face-to-face, intermediary motion; motions mediated or enhanced by the instrumentality of the cameras and/or microphones; and now, Internet modem, Wifi, broadband, among other connectivity platforms of the old and new information technologies. The character of proxemics suggests influence on the society by the spacial environment which impacts on the individual as the individual impacts on the environment, reciprocally. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the light that shines are all parts of the environment; are dynamic participants in communication synergy. The theatre, like other media of communication has its own framework, where the stage is the environment, accoustic elements modulate the voice, and the electronic element of motion is the mechanical or regulated movement on the stage continuum, while electrical light is the synergy of making communication effectively visually possible. The element of sound accoustics further interacts with the environment, making a flow of information and giving a feedback from the audience as being tantamount to the whole process of this tripodal concept. Theatrical activities, mediated or unmediated, can be summarized thus; an author conceives a pattern of physical, visual and vocal images which are put into words.

Another group of artists, such as broadcasters, advertisers or cartoonists, following the direction, recreates interactive and interactable images for a rather potential captive audience. The ideas are made visible and audible by translating the author's written words into acting, music, animation, dancing, costumes; all scenery, enhanced by lighting. All the elements thus mentioned, when applied, constitute a complete process of effective communication vis-a-vis the tripodal concept, in its intricate operation, synergized with all its dimensional operability for human interests.

We can establish another example, using the radio which is a very popular and long-standing medium of expression. Radio/with its affordability, is everywhere: in homes, cars, offices, shops, parks, gardens etc. There are two main forms of radio stations. Amplitude modulation and frequency modulation; popularly abbreviated as AM and FM stations respectively. The difference is that the AM operates in channels and the FM stations operate in classes. Technologically, the new radio-broadcast

technology or electronics have developed the AM, FM; shortwaves-mediumwaves transmission capability with digital and digitization platforms, afforded by electromagnetic compatibility or conformity. It is audio, that is, appealing to only our auditory senses. Hearing perception has an abstract projection rendered in the mind's eye and the mind's eye leads one to perceive the environment, and all on radio, as if watching it on stage as a live production. Radio theatre is audio-lingual, the hearer projects and extrapolates the-stage-audience continuum. It is actually as effective as the live stage theatre with its audio-lingual screen, depending on the packaging of the programme. This is moreso, if the appropriate semantics are properly interwoven. Radio script must make emphasis on sound effects that enhance the action on the mind or mental stage, made more effective through appropriate choice of mind's eye-stimulating words. In this regard, listeners should not have problems decoding the message. It is thus usually very clear in the mind's eye. The tripod concept, therefore, is the environment which is present in the mind's eye synergy of microphones, lighting, camera, sound channel and all movements either going up or down; cyclically and spirally, as may be packaged to elicit appropriate effects. The three elements must be used effectively to avoid communication noise, maximizing all the senses, and even tactile content is well packaged to affect the audience. Communication must affect behaviour from the communicator's perspective; when it is positive, he wins. Wiener (1948:84ff) suggests that the exponent of cybernetics instructs that when, 'the information which proceeds backward from the performance is able to change the general method and pattern of performance, we have a process which may well be called learning'. The elements of behaviour have certain contents such as actions, information concept such as actions or information; these concepts are emotions as well as modes of sharing. This, therefore, implies that the existence of rules or agreed conventions, a system of signs, must be semiologically used, if sharing is to be equitable and mutually beneficial. Hilton (1993: 7ff) posits that there is a need to share and the means of sharing, if a means is understood and agreed by all, particularly of abstract elements such as information or emotion. According to him:

The purpose of performing thus becomes one of generating intensified experience for all who participate in it rather than the representation of some pre-existing action or state of feeling according to some immanent ideal located in its poetic, textual source.

The need for kinetics, proxemics and cybematics coordination of communication is irreducible; and in most instances, inalienable.

Kinetics

The need or importance of kinetics as a non-verbal communication metaphor

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was first recognized by Birdwhistell who believed that 'the entire communication context must be observed in all its ramifications, and that it is only productive to isolate individual variables if they can be integrated into general communicative stream; as quoted by Tubbs and Moss, (1991: 15).

Birdwhistell introduced the term kinetics to mean the study of body movement in communication. Body movement is extensive when it includes movement of the head and face; he further estimated 700,000 possible physical signs that can be transmitted via the body. Nemele stated, inter-alia, that, 'body movement or kinetics is; concerned with how we can use the different parts of the body to aid communication'. He expatiates, further, by giving some examples of kinetics to include facial expression or facial emblems, eye-contact, emotional tears, regulators such as nodding, hand gestures, shifts in posture, illustrations (such as wave of the hand, pointing to the direction of an entity, touching and so on).

Kinetics communication is, probably, the most obvious non-verbal communication form. Though it is recorded as the most misrepresented, body movements vary from culture to culture or across cultures. It can either strengthen communication or damage it. Even while sitting completely still you may unconsciously be communicating a powerful message about your real feelings. Stillness or silence can be golden in such regards. Due to its subtle distinction, much range of body movements can be difficult to read and control. What can be clearly understood in one culture may make no sense in another culture. Ekman and Friesen in their seminal works on kinetics classify it into five categories, namely emblems, illustrators, affects, display, regulators and adaptors. Emblems are non-verbal messages that have verbal counterpart. For instance, the sign for victory in a particular country may have different signs than in other communities. An example cited by Ekman and Friesen (1969:49-98) is the ok-sign, symbolising the letter O. This may, however, be misunderstood as symbolising the number "zero" or worthless. It may also be seen as a symbol of female genital, and as such, may be understood to be obscene.

Definitively, such emblems could convoke a bewildering array of different meanings. The number of interpretations and different meanings may be endless, because they occur only sporadically and in specific contexts; a wrongly used emblematic kinetic movement may be relatively easily identified as such. Illustrators, on the other hand, may not be clearly linked to specific sayings or words used. Illustrators are used more often to illustrate what is being said. This again is different from culture to culture. Illustrators are more continuous as well as more subconsciously interpreted than the emblematic. Kinetic movement in some cultures that make extensive use of illustrators may be considered as unintelligent; in other cultures, lack of illustrators can be easily construed as a lack of interest.

Affective displays are body, or more frequently facial movements that display a certain affective state expressive of emotion. This is less conscious than illustrators, but less frequent. They are understood because they convey universal emotional feelings. Lack of affective display may often be regarded

as a lack of emotion which might be wrong. Anger can be demonstrated and understood as threatening or imposing, although it may not be probably intended. Regulators are signs that regulate, modulate and maintain the flow of speech during a conversation. These can be both Kinetic, such as nodding the head, as well as, nonkinetic, such as eye movements. Fatt (1998: 10) suggests that these are some of the most culturally determined kinetic signs. As regulators moderate the flow of information, and are frequently used as a feedback of whether or not the recipient has understood the message they can also be highly confusing. Regulators are very important to the flow of information. If misinterpreted, regulatory non-verbal signs may lead to serious problems among humans with such diverse cultures. Adaptors entail postural changes and other movements at a low level of awareness, and so have been passed for the 'magic' to understanding conversation. People just feel they can read others' thoughts, feelings etc. All these have given rise to over estimation as well as simplification of adaptors. Adaptors can be understood wrongly, for instance, moving in a chair may be used to resolve a specific physical situation rather than interpreted as something else. Adaptors are usually performed with low level of awareness, and such as, can be important, because the person undertaking the act may be unaware of his act. But, he may undertake a movement which he understands as an emblem; the same may be appropriately understood or not. However, emblems are like all semiotic codifications and lend themselves to interpretations or meanings that are mostly conventional.

Cybernetics

Cybernetics is the study of the operation of control and communication systems. It connotes an originator or initiator of a message; he holds the determining position as the originator or encoder of the message as it is; the act of steering to evoke the rich decoding interaction of goals, predictions, actions, feedback etc. Cybernetic description of psychology, language, arts, performance, or intelligence may be quite different from and approximate more conventional, hard scientific views. Implementation may then follow in software or hardware, or in the design of social, managerial, and other classes of inter personal systems. The relative signs, symbols and significations are deductible or readily decoded conventionally or analogically.

Cybernetics evolved from a constructivist view of the world where objectivity derives from shared agreement about meaning, and where information is an attribute in interaction rather than a commodity stored in a computer, as remarked by Winograd and Flores (1986: 107).

Cybernetics has affected software for intelligent training, knowledge representation, cognitive model, computer-supported cooperative work, and neutral modelling - useful results have been demonstrated. Many beguiling artifacts have been produced with an appeal more familiar in an entertainment medium or to organic life than a piece of soft ware. Pask (1971: 76-79). However, it is cybernetics epistemological stance - that all

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human knowing is constrained by our perceptions and our beliefs, and hence is subjective - that is, its contribution to these fields. Will cybernetics lead to break through in the construction of intelligent artifacts of the complexity of a nervous system or brain? The answer, here, can be operably deterministic or merely conjectural; being an abstract scientific concept.

Proxemics

Proxemics refers to the study of the interaction of human beings with their environment, that is, the manner in which personal space is structured. The space or distance between persons is a powerful concept, and research indicates that it directly relates to our interpretation of the meaning of messages conveyed by the other person. This is encapsulated in what can be called 'the body-language metaphors', or dichotomy in communication alignments. It can also be called communication dichotomy', or 'body-space coordination' or 'body-space alignment'.

Proxemics creates togetherness. This term, was coined by Hall and refers to the study of the use of space and how various differences in use can affect one either to relax or to be anxious. Proxemics has two divisions which are physical and personal territory. Personal territory deals with the space between two or more persons on a queue. Two important aspects of proxemics and the role they perform in interpersonal communication are colours in the environment, and cultural differences in the use of personal territory. Cultural differences, and the use of colours can have great impact upon people's interactions with others. There are more aspects of proxemics such as eye-contact, facial expression, smells, gender, number of people involved, subject matter and goals of communication for which people continuously and automatically adjust their use of space. The social function of communication can be gleaned in the aforementioned aspects, involving more than one person interacting and sharing certain elements of behaviour, experience, actions, emotions, concepts, information etc. To attain mutual understanding agreed, conventions, a system of signs must be applied so that the sharing of meanings may be mutually beneficial. For effective and result-oriented communication, what affect to be shared, and the means of sharing must be commonly accepted and known by those concerned to get appropriate effects. As well-known proxemically, a person expressing anger is perceived as less threatening, the further away the person is. If the person is close, the expression of anger becomes more threatening. Physical closeness can itself be used to threaten the opponent. In animals, their senses are unimaginable and they tend to keep their distance for protection of themselves from their enemies. Physical closeness is an expression of love and intimacy. Areas close to the body is usually reserved for intimate relationship and vice versa. This principle is universally accepted and practised. Paradoxically, differences can be observed in the distance that is agreed to be penetrated by the other person across cultures. Some cultures, especially those that use a high level of haptic behaviours, structure their

personal spaces closest. For example, the moslems and their wives do not live in the same flat, the women are separated from the men. The architectural plans of houses there allow the women to live behind the main house and is very private to the women; possibly in harems.

A distinct example is the fact attributed to Latin cultures wherein people are known to sit close to each other, so also are the Northern European cultures. Remland and Jones (1995:281-297) reported that in the sample of seven Nations, the English sample showed on an average, the greatest distance during conversation, whereas the Irish sample showed the lowest distance, while southern European countries such as Greece and Italy showed generally a closer distance than England.

Four types of personal territory are public space, which ranges from 12 - 15ft and it is the distance maintained between the audience and speaker; example, the President, Governor etc. Another aspect of personal territory is the social space which ranges from 4ft to 10ft and is used for communication among business associates, as well as to alert strangers using public places such as beaches. The third example is personal space and it ranges from 2ft to 4ft; this can be experienced among friends and family members. Personal space can also be used to separate people waiting in queues in banks etc. The fourth space is the intimate space and ranges to one foot and is reserved for whispering and embracing.

The territories are culturally and ethnically inclined, depending on where one finds herself/himself. Clashes are bound to arise or not to arise, for instance, nose-to-nose relationship with a colleague from different tribes may exist because his or her social space equates to your intimate space. A strong force of pushing away in order to regain your social space may clash while he pushes on, trying to maintain his. The reactions are very different in other cultures. A good and very close proxemics creates togetherness. This term, was coined by Hall and refers to the study of the use of space and how various space differences in use can affect one either to relax or to be anxious. Proxemics has two divisions which are physical and personal territory. Personal territory deals with the space between two or more persons on a queue. Physical suggests bodily contact in terms of proximity. Two important aspects of proxemics and the role they perform in interpersonal communication are colours in the environment, and cultural differences in the use of personal territory. Colours or cultural affinity can orient or disorient varied reactions.

Cultural differences, and the use of colours can also have great impact upon people's interactions with others. There are more aspects of proxemics such as eye-contact, facial expression, smells, gender, number of people involved, subject matter and goals of communication for which people continuously and automatically adjust their use of space. The social function of communication can be gleaned in the aforementioned aspects, involving more than one person interacting and sharing certain elements of behaviour, experience, actions, emotions, concepts, information etc. To attain mutual understanding on agreed conventions, a system of signs must be applied so

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that the sharing of meanings may be mutually beneficial. For effective and result-oriented communication, What is shared, and the means of sharing must be commonly accepted and known by those concerned. There is a lot codes of meanings, proxemically in respect of our transportation system. The Americans reportedly pull in their elbows and knees in less than acquaintance circumstance, not to touch or even look at another person in a car or bus etc. In Nigeria, very different people are crammed into same cars or buses until not even a space is left. People are pressed against one another's sweaty bodies which will not be tolerated in other places. Cultural ethics which may be very astringent, are strictly observed to make life worth living. These are all the varied reflections of good communication, which must be within the society. This shows the complexity of human communication, though we tend to focus more attention on the descriptive or referential. There are other aspects of communication which are functioning intricately without our knowledge. The three concepts, we have, attempt to give meaning in one way or the other as aids, or exist in their totality, to facilitate affects and effects.

THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Humans, as Homo-Sapiens, communicate by use of movement, space, gestures, and the human voice. Communication is a vital part of personal life and is also important in business, education, and any other situation where people interact with one another, in the process of sharing meanings or experiences. Even with the large population of people and their ways of life, sharing in certain aspects of life cannot be ruled out. Very important is the invention of symbols, which are codified or conventionalized and thus are commonly used to express feelings and emotions. The barriers between people who speak different languages, who worship different gods, and who live and work under completely different circumstances, are high and hard to break down. Art in various forms is the most powerful medium of communication available to man and can break through those barriers as remarked by Terence Greieder (1990:14). It is a well established fact that to be a member of any social group or organization, one must participate in its cultural life; in a culture which is learned and consists of knowledge, skills, ideas and symbols known and used by members of the group. All human societies are bound together by a shared way of life that differentiate one social group from another. One important thing that is done is to send symbolic messages back and forth among members. The process of creating a meaning between two or more persons is what communication is. Communication is a tool for unity because of a commonly shared means of communication in building up a holistic organization or society. This communal sharing invariably draws people together, forming a strong bond of relationship among people. An important factor of communication is to achieve affective changes in behaviour. This can be arrived at positively or

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negatively. Charles Hockett as paraphrased by Adeniran (1987: 16ff), traced the development of the communication system in man as part of his evolution and suggested that the system itself has become such a compulsive driving force that not communicating might indeed blight the human spirit and turn such uncommunicating people neurotic.

Communication is an important part of human development, and in societal functioning. To support this fact, Akpan (1987:3-4) quoted Professor Robert Monaghan and reveals that:

If we had no communication of information to us, our lives would be static, there would be no growth, no transformation. We would not be enlightened, we would live in total ignorance. Life would not be worth living. Without communication we humans become impoverished, less strong. Something less human and we lose the ability to extend ourselves and to change. For total efficiency and result-oriented venture, communication is the weapon.

The dynamism of communication cannot be limited to behavioural changes, but it also effects complete action towards improving humans. Farowbi as quoted by Ndimele (1997:139) states that 'communication is a vital aspect of social change. It is the key that opens the door for change'. The existence of man, his well-being and the manner of his overall indulgences, in arriving at where he is today and to better his tomorrow rallies around communication. This starts from within, that is, the self. For onward progress) the self, reacting to the impingement of communication, is enabled to desire further waves of this communicative influence to improve its general well-being.

CONCLUSION

The tripodal concept of communication has established itself in the give-and-take flow of relationships and responses. It has tapped the raw materials of interdisciplinary framework, powered by research and authenticated by 'experienceful' stakeholders. The artist, who sits on the 'tripod' as a rallying focus, has taken captive elements of Biology, Physics, Electronics; material of sciences and the environments. These, he has meticulously interwoven into what is now known as 'theatre plus'. As the arrival of the tripodal concept is savoured, sight and sound ought not to be lost of the enormous possibilities beyond its present boundaries. These boundaries should be adequately nurtured, if the communicative and therapeutic roles of the theatre in its all-embracing aspects are to be effectively played and adequately energized and synergized, to live up to its increasingly demanding and innovating imperatives. Such imperatives have been conditioned by both the smooth and rough edges of globalization vis-a-vis the expectations demanded of the media to produce results in favour of democracy and democratization. Other non-democratic variables demand no less of the effects and affects of

communication in attitude changes and reorientations.

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